## Spanning the Gap

## Resort Era to Recreation Area



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Spanning the Gap
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The best known part of the recreation area is the Water Gap, a distinct notch, more than a mile wide, cut through Kittatinny Ridge by the Delaware River. From the

mid-19th through the early 20th century, Delaware Water Gap was one of the most popular summer resorts in the east; dozens of hotels served thousands of summer visitors.

In 1829 Anthony Dutot, now considered the "father" of the resort industry in the area, built *Kittatinny Hotel* on the Pennsylvania side, above the Water Gap. Over the years it enlarged to palatial size. Its many gardened terraces overlooked the changing beauty of the river, and from the mountains behind the hotel a clear stream flowed through the kitchens where feasts were prepared. A small and exclusive group of wealthy patrons returned to spend the entire season each year, enjoying the scenic beauty, outdoor activities, amusement parks, souvenir shops, and dance halls of the area, as well as the company of their own society.

Early transportation in the area had been limited to the river and a few rough roads. About 1846, stage coach routes were developed. Later the railroad and trolley lines made travel to the Water Gap easier.

By the early 1900s, however, many people had private automobiles, and extensive advertising in magazines and newspapers attracted tourists from

(Left) Remains of the fountain that stood in front of *Kittatinny Hotel* are visible on Route 611 at Resort Point Overlook PA.



Stairs to nowhere remind today's hiker of Mt. Minsi's past enthusiasts.



Ruins of *Water Gap House* atop Mt. Minsi in 2005. On higher ground than *Kittatinny Hotel*, Water Gap House and

the big cities of the east coast to a cool, refreshing holiday in the mountains. At the same time, improved roads gave people a greater choice of holiday areas. Weekend excursions often replaced summer long holidays. The old resort business began to decline.

Frequently, fires destroyed the older wooden hotels, and they were seldom rebuilt. The economic depression of the 1930s changed the nation's way of life, and grand hotels could not compete with the new, popularly-priced, year-round weekend resorts in the nearby Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania.

In 1931, a fire claimed *Kittatinny Hotel* itself. The stream that once ran through the kitchen now flows freely to the river. The beauty of the river still changes daily, but all that is left of the old resort way of life is the grass-covered foundation, visible at Resort Point Overlook, of the fountain that once stood in front of the grand hotel.

its flagpole were visible for miles.



The view of the river from Mt. Minsi is now blocked by trees and can be approximated only from a lower point on the mountain in winter. The rail tracks (foreground) once served tourist excursion trains.